Focus on Transportation

In this part of the plan, we recognize that the world is changing. Certain trends and circumstances are emerging and are likely to significantly affect Washington's transportation system in several ways. In addition, the transcending and emerging topics are explored. These topics are intertwined throughout the issues addressed by the chapters of Part II. Part III is devoted to a discussion of these topics in greater depth informing the reader of the variables influencing transportation planning and policy.

Each topic raises new questions, sheds light on differing perspectives, describes new or potential relationships, and draws attention to variables that transportation providers can not fully control. The plan recognizes that in the coming two to five years, significant resolution of several issues will have a direct impact on shaping the update to the next WTP, future transportation budgets, and the state's economic vitality.

Part III is organized as follows:

- Funding and Financing
- Transportation Policy Studies and Plans
- Governance and Partnerships
- Transportation and Land Use

Funding and Financing

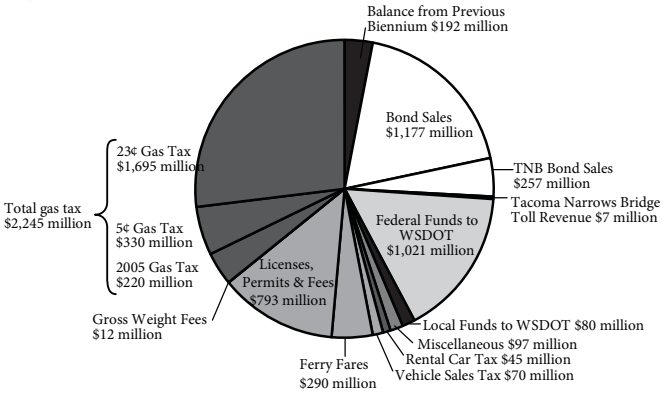
I-5 38th Street Interchange

Funding Availability and Stability

A variety of sources have funded and continue to fund transportation systems in Washington. The major sources of state transportation revenue are the gas tax and licenses, permits, and fees. The state budget is also funded from ferry fares and concessions, rental car taxes, a 0.3% sales tax on vehicle sales, and miscellaneous revenues, which include interest earnings. Funds also come from bond sales, federal funds, local funds, and remaining cash balances from previous years.

The state collects gas tax revenues, vehicle licenses, permits, and fees. Portions of these funds are distributed (by statute) back to cities and counties and other state agencies. The chart (below) depicts projected transportation funds coming into the state for the 2005–2007 biennium. The next pie chart (right of the first) shows how these funds will be distributed to cities, counties, and other agencies. In general, the pattern of collection and expenditure can be expected to continue into the future.

Figure III-1
Total State Transportation Funds
(Reflects 2006 Legislative Supplemental Budget)
2005-2007
$6.3 billion

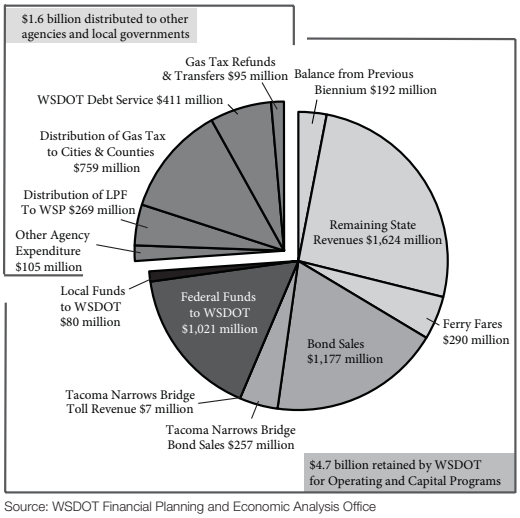


Source: WSDOT Financial Planning and Economic Analysis Office

Washington Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax History: 1920-2005

The Motor Fuel Tax (gas tax) is the most significant source of revenue for Washington's transportation system. The State has had a gas tax in place since 1921. The 18th Amendment to the State Constitution passed in 1944, dedicated revenue from the gas tax solely to "highway purposes," clarified in statute and case law as state highways, state ferries, county roads, and city streets. This provision is still in effect.

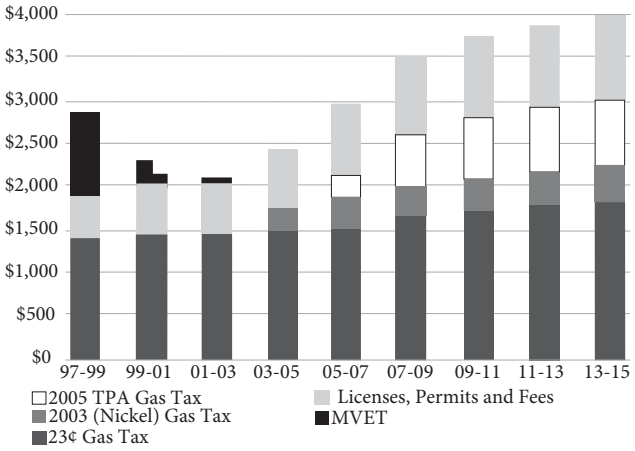
Figure III-2
Distribution of State Transportation Funds
(Reflects 2006 Legislative Supplemental Budget)
2005-2007



Source: WSDOT Financial Planning and Economic Analysis Office

As of July 1, 2006 the state gas tax is 34¢/gallon. The first tax on motor fuel (1921) was 1¢/gallon, increasing every few years through 1949 where it reached 6.5¢/gallon. Less frequent increases brought the rate to 23¢/gallon by 1991 where the rate stayed constant for 12 years. In 2003 the Legislature increased the gas tax by 5¢/gallon bringing the rate to 28¢/gallon. The 2005 Legislature further increased the tax rate to ultimately reach 37.5¢/gal by July of 2008.

Figure III-3
Major Sources of Tax Revenue (millions of dollars)



Source: WSDOT Financial Planning and Economic Analysis

Vehicle Licenses, Permits and Fees History: 1915 – 2005

The state began collecting vehicles registration fees in 1915 in support of state roads. Initially the fees were based on horsepower of the vehicle but quickly shifted to vehicle weight. By 1957 some of the revenues began to be used by the State Patrol with some of the funds distributed to a separate State Patrol account. Between 1971 and 1980 the State Patrol was funded directly through the Motor Vehicle account. Separate deposits for the State Patrol account resumed in 1981 and continue today. The current vehicle registration fee for new or used vehicles is $30.

Legislation passed in 2005 created a new vehicle weight fee on passenger cars. In addition to the $30 registration fee, vehicles weighing up to 4,000 pounds pay a $10 fee, vehicles weighing up to 6,000 pounds pay $20, and vehicles weighing up to 8,000 pounds pay $30.

Gross weight fees that apply specifically to trucks were established in 1937. Up until 1987 two fees were levied separately, a registration fee and a fee based on the weight of the truck. In January 1987 a new law went into effect that brought the two fees together to form the Combined License Fee. In 1994 the weight schedule was extended from 80,000 pounds to 105,500 pounds and fees increased for trucks over 40,000 pounds declared gross weight. The most recent fee increases for the combined license fee took place in 2003 and 2005.

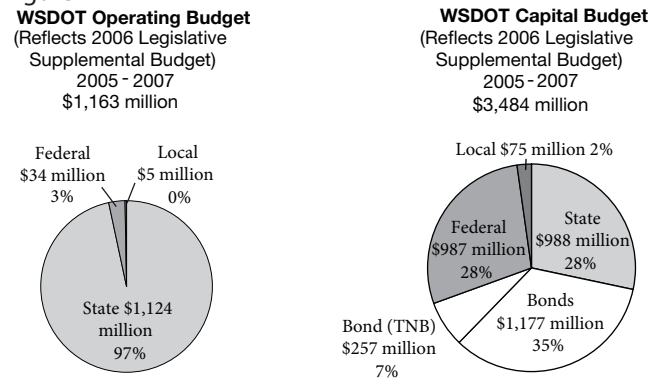
From 1977 until December 1999 a portion of the proceeds from the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) helped to fund transportation systems. Enactment of legislation initially proposed in Initiative 695 eliminated much of this taxing authority. Sound Transit (the Puget Sound Regional Transportation Authority) still collects an MVET tax in the Puget Sound Region.

Current Financing: Sources and Uses

WSDOT Sources of Funds

WSDOT projects are not appropriated by funding source. Revenues restricted by the 18th Amendment such as the gas tax, are only available for "highway purposes." Gas tax and non-gas tax revenues such as licenses, permits, and fees are commingled and combined with federal and local funds and bond proceeds to provide the basis from which funding for highways is achieved. Non-restricted funds (rental car tax and 0.3% vehicle sales tax, vehicle weight fees, and certain license fees) are also commingled with federal, local, and general obligation bond proceeds for use on non-highway transportation projects. WSDOT develops a budget designating an amount to be used for capital expenditures and an amount to be used for operating costs. WSDOT's budget for operations and capital investment for 2005-2007 is expected to be $4.65 billion.

Figure III-4



Source: WSDOT Financial Planning and Economic Analysis Office

Bond financing is an important component for the capital program. It is important to remember that this instrument obligates a portion of the tax revenues

collected, making them unavailable for cash financing of projects. State transportation bonds are referred to as "double barreled" bonds. Bonds don't create new funds, they just make them available for projects sooner. They are obligation bonds secured by the full faith and credit of the state as well as secured by the gas tax. Debt service is paid directly from gas tax receipts.

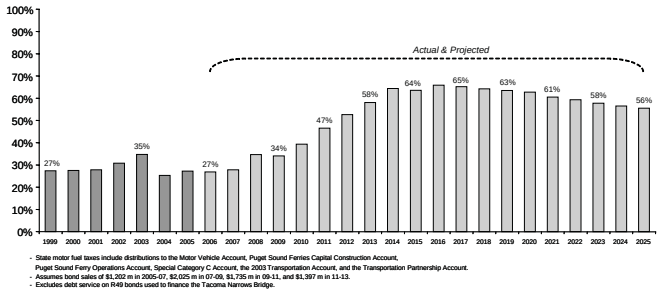
The use of bond financing for transportation follows a rigorous legal process. The Legislature must enact a statute authorizing the sale of bonds for a specific purpose, and then the bond proceeds must be appropriated before they can be spent. Bonds are sold through the State Finance Committee.

The 2003 and the 2005 transportation funding packages are dependent on bond financing. Ultimately the gas tax component for both of these packages will be completely leveraged to pay debt service.

The Tacoma Narrows Bridge project is also nearly 100% bond financed, however debt service (though backed by the gas tax and the full faith and credit of the state) is to be paid with toll revenues.

The chart below shows the amount of the gas tax leveraged against current debt service and planned debt service from future bond sales. Because the revenue stream to pay debt service on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge is from tolling, the debt service for this project is not included in the chart below.

Debt Service as a Percent of the State's Overall Share of the Gas Tax



Source: WSDOT Financial Planning and Economic Analysis Office

The 2003 Transportation Funding Package also authorized the sale of general obligation (GO) bonds to be used for multimodal projects. These bond proceeds will be used for rail projects and for multimodal transportation terminals relating to ferries. Debt service on the GO bonds will be paid from non-18th amendment revenues.

Federal funding also leverages state revenues, however not in the same way as bond financing. Federal funds require a certain percentage of state "match" to utilize the funds. Federal gas tax along with several other federal transportation related taxes are the basis for federal transportation funds. The newest federal transportation act enacted in 2005 is called SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users).

In addition to highway construction, SAFETEA-LU will provide funding for priorities like Interstate Maintenance, Border Crossing Initiatives, Transportation Community and System Preservation, Real-time Management Information, Projects of National and Regional Significance, National Corridor Infrastructure Projects, Truck Parking Facilities, Roadway and Work Zone Safety Improvements, and other transportation improvements like Safe Routes to Schools.

Some benefits from prior transportation funding will be lost without WSDOT's work to protect the state system from the potential impacts of land use and development. The department reviews proposed land use changes and developments, and works through local governments to reduce and mitigate adverse impacts on state transportation assets. Mitigation funding obtained through local government is extremely small in relation to other sources. However, WSDOT's participation in development and land use reviews is critical to preserving the benefits of prior investments for the traveling public.

WSDOT Uses of Funds

Highways and Ferries (18th Amendment Protected Funds)

Funding for all transportation systems is viewed as either a capital investment use or an operating use. Highways and ferries use funding for both purposes: capital uses include new projects or preservation of existing facilities and operations include maintenance, management and support, and planning, data analysis, and research.

Operating Uses

Maintenance is the largest component of the operating budget. For the 2005-2007 biennium $353 million is budgeted for highway maintenance and $376 million for ferries maintenance. State tax revenues, federal funds, and local government funds pay for operating costs. Ferry fare revenue is used exclusively for ferry operations and maintenance and currently covers approximately 70% of the costs.

Capital Uses

Highway capital program funding is comprised of a mix of state tax revenues, federal funds, and local government funds and bond proceeds.

Bonding is a significant funding component of the capital program. Both the 2003 and the 2005 transportation packages specified specific highway and ferry capital projects to be paid for with a mix of cash and bond proceeds. With the passage of these two funding packages WSDOT's construction program is now one of the largest in the country.

The Tacoma Narrows Bridge project is currently WSDOT's single largest capital project, and is the world's largest suspension bridge currently under construction. Planning and financing major transportation structures is an ongoing, complex, endeavor that requires innovative solutions.

Construction started on the bridge that would come to be known as "Galloping Gertie" on November 25, 1938. The state had estimated in would cost $11 million to build but Leon Moiseiff of New York said it could be done cheaper. Against protest from state engineers, the design went forward at $5.59 million. The bridge opened to traffic on July 1, 1940. Governor Clarence D. Martin paid the first toll and drove across. The bridge collapsed on Nov. 7, 1940 and remained closed until completion of a new bridge in October of 1950.

Tacoma Narrows Bridge

The Tacoma Narrows bridge in 1940 (above and top right).

1950's Bridge

Concept Image

2006 Under Construction

New Bridge Statistics:

Bridge Length: 5,400 ft. *(overall)*
Main Span: 2,800 ft. *(tower to tower)*
Suspended Roadway:
- 53 million lbs.
- 46 deck sections,120-ft. by 78-ft. average size

Towers: 510 ft. tall
- 8,500 cubic yards concrete *(per tower)*
- 2.9 million lbs. of reinforcing steel *(both)*

Caissons (tower foundations, each):
- 85,000 tons *(total weight)*

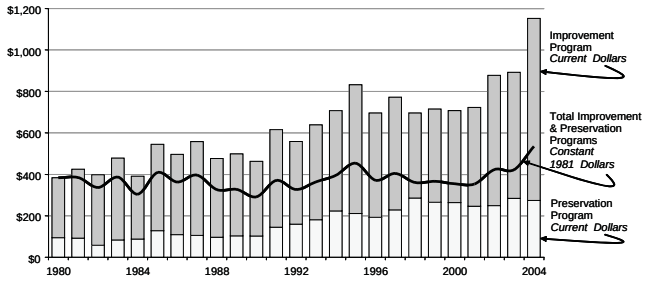
Anchorages (each):
- 81 million lbs. *(total)*
- 20,000 cubic yards concrete
- 1 million lbs. of reinforcing steel

Cable Diameter (each): 20.5 inches
Structural Steel, Superstructure:
(parts of the bridge above water)
35.5 million lbs.
Structural Steel, Suspension System:
(Cable wire and saddles atop towers)
12 million lbs.
New Parallel Bridge Completed: Early 2007
1950 Bridge (Retrofit) Completed: Early 2008

The two primary components of the capital program are the improvement program and the preservation program. The chart below shows the investment ratio between the improvement and preservation programs over time. In 1980 preservation was approximately 25% of the improvement and preservation budget. By 1998 preservation of the existing system had increased to 41% of the budget. With the passage of the nickel gas tax (2003) and the start of the capital construction projects associated with the tax increase, the ratio returned the preservation program to 25% of the budget in 2004.

Preservation and Improvements Investment

Dollars in millions



Source: WSDOT Financial and Economic Analysis Office

Other Sources and Uses—Multimodal Projects (non-restricted funds)

Multimodal projects generally are non-highway transportation projects and can include rail, aviation, multimodal ferry terminals, and public transportation. (Because funds are non-restricted use of these funds can include highways.) Funding for these types of projects comes from the rental car tax, the 0.3% sales tax on vehicle sales, vehicle weight fees, and certain license fees. These taxes and fees are combined with federal and local funds as well as some bonding to provide the base for multimodal project funding.

Operating Uses - Multimodal Projects

Grants to public transportation districts and rail operations are the biggest portion of the multimodal operating budget. The grant program for public transportation is administered by WSDOT; hence it is an operating cost in WSDOT's budget, even though ultimately the funds are often used for capital expenditures by the individual public transportation districts.

Capital Uses - Multimodal Projects

Under the current budget, the major components of the capital program are Washington State Ferry terminal construction, rail capital construction, and funds to local programs.

General obligation bonds will continue to be sold to support the construction of the Mukilteo ferry terminal and the rail capital program.

Aviation Division—Sources and Uses

Funding for pavement projects, signage, lighting and other facility maintenance and improvements at 139 public use, general aviation airports comes primarily from the tax on general aviation fuel. Funds are distributed in the form of grants (Airport Aid Grant Program) and leverages federal aviation dollars. Currently, the ratio of state funds to federal funds is about 1 to 10. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) also has additional funding for airports listed in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). Washington State currently has 67 NPIAS-listed airports which receive $150,000 per year under the current Vision 100 Non-Primary Entitlement Program.

Local Roads and Streets—Sources and Uses

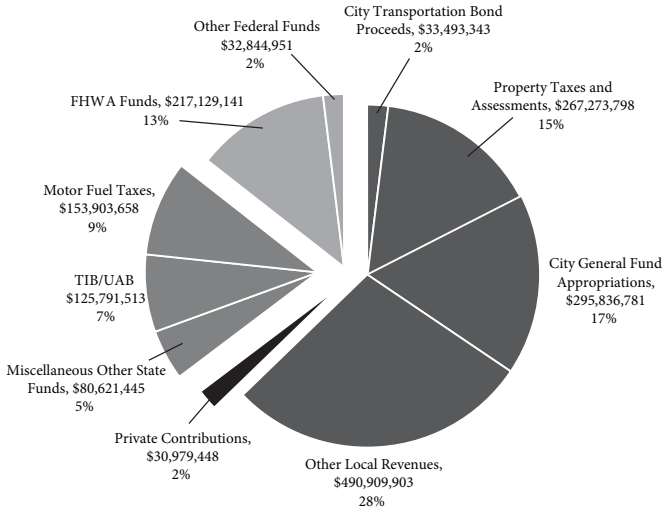
Funding for local roads and streets as well as public transit districts and ports play a crucial role in Washington State's transportation system. The following section describes the sources available and uses of those funds as they currently exist

Revenues from local governments play an important role in transportation finance. General funds and property taxes have traditionally been the primary local revenues supporting transportation. However, the increased pressure to produce revenue for transportation spending and for leveraging ever scarcer federal, state, and local funds has caused local governments to turn increasingly to such revenues as special assessments, development fees, and local highway user revenue. Local debt initiatives have also seen greater use.

Cities—Sources of Funds

While gas tax receipts make up a significant portion of state transportation sources, the gas tax accounts for only 16% of transportation funding for cities. Cities use a mix of taxes and fees and along with state and federal funds and some bond proceeds to fund transportation.

Figure III-7
Total Transportation Funding - Cities, 2004-2005
$1.730 billion

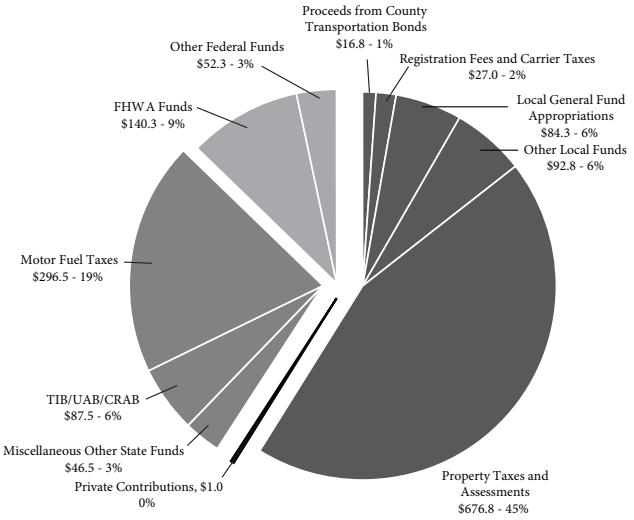


Source: WSDOT Financial Planning & Economic Analysis Office

Counties—Sources of Funds

The gas tax is a more significant source of funds for counties than for cities. The gas tax provides approximately 25% of transportation funding for counties. Property taxes make up the largest contribution at 45%. Bonding for transportation is not a significant component for most counties.

Figure III-8
Total Transportation Funding - Counties, 2004 - 2005
$1.522 billion

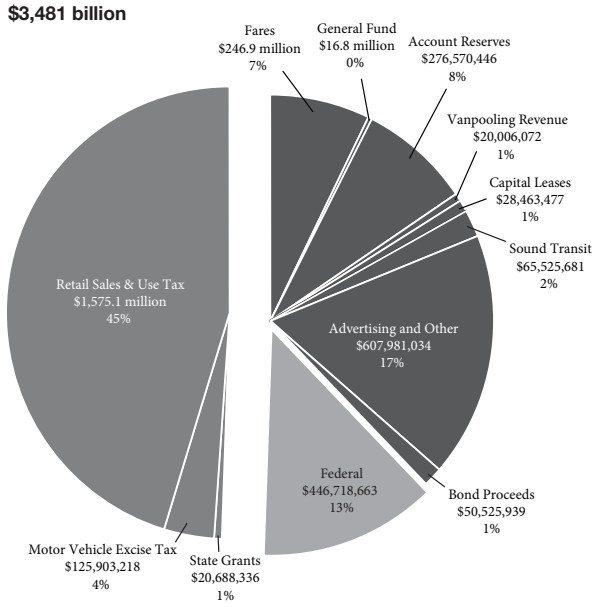


Source: WSDOT Financial & Economic Analysis Office

Public Transit—Sources of Funds

The 28 transit districts in the state all have the authority to impose (with voter approval) an additional local sales tax. This locally imposed sales tax is the major revenue source for transit districts. These tax revenues are combined with fare box revenues, federal funds, state grants, and a mix of various local funds to form the basis for the operating and capital public transit budget. State grants are not a significant component for either the operating or capital budgets of transit districts.

Figure III-9
Total Public Transit District Funds, 2004-2005
$3,481 billion

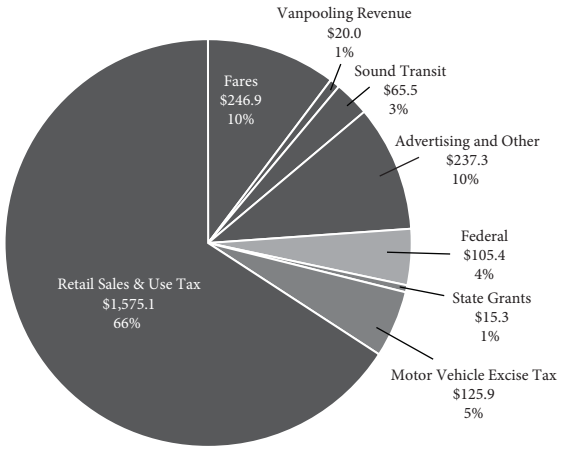


Source: WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division

Public Transit Operating Uses

Unlike the state and cities and counties, the operating budget for public transit is the more significant budget. 66% of the operating budget comes from the locally imposed additional sales tax component. Sales tax for transit varies in each transit district and ranges from 0.1%–0.8%. Fares contribute another 10% and advertising and other fees make up an additional 14%. The operating budget balance is from a mix of federal funds, grants, and distributions from other agencies.

Figure III-10
Total Public Transit Operating Budget, 2004 - 2005
$2,391 Billion

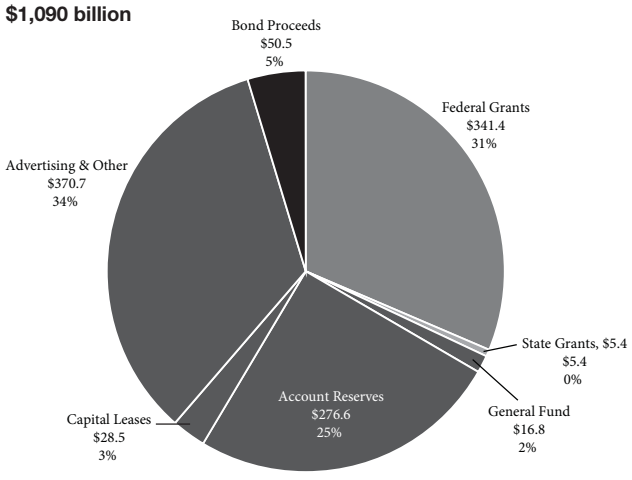


Source: WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division

Public Transit Capital Uses

The capital budget is the smaller component of the public transit budget. Federal funds make up 31% of the funds while advertising, interest, and other miscellaneous fees and taxes make up 64% of the capital budget. Bond proceeds are not a significant component for the capital budget.

Figure III-11
Total Public Transit Capital Budget 2004 - 2005
$1,090 billion



Source: WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division

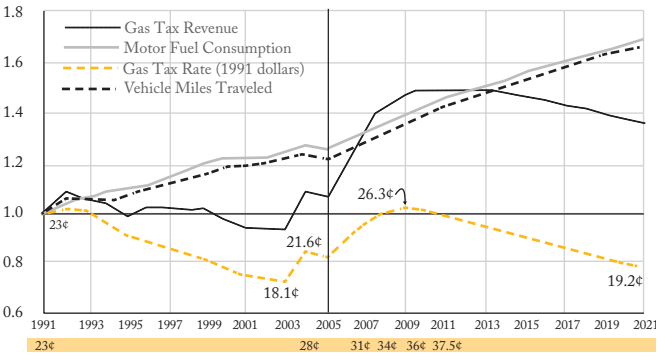
Options for the Future

Assessing the Current Situation

Traditional funding sources have not kept up with ever-increasing demands placed on publicly financed transportation systems. The inability of these traditional revenue streams to substantially improve or expand transportation systems is due to many factors. For example, the tax on gas has been increased from 1¢/gallon in 1921 to 34¢/gallon in 2006. These gas tax increases were necessitated by many factors, most prominently, the effects of inflation diminishing the purchasing power of revenues collected, increases in vehicle fuel efficiency, increases in the size, scope, complexity, and diversity of transportation systems, and ever-increasing infrastructure costs from such things as stricter environmental regulations and increasing materials and land acquisition costs. Since these historical pressures are not likely to diminish in future years, traditional funding sources intended to address transportation systems' obligations will either need to continue increasing or new sources of revenue will be needed.

Because the fuel tax is levied on a volume basis rather than on value, changes in consumption patterns can affect receipts regardless of the price of the gasoline. If price increases reduce demand for fuel, tax receipts fall even if the total value of the gas sold goes up. The opposite may also occur.

Figure II-12
Growth Rates Compared: Vehicle Miles Traveled, Gas Tax and Gas Tax Rates



Historical, Current and Future Look at Gas Tax Revenue Components (in millions)

	1991	2005(Estimated)	2021(Projected)
Vehicle Miles Traveled	45,500	55,100	75,500
Fuel Gallons of Consumption	2,600	3,200	4,400
Gas Tax Revenue (1991 dollars)	$574	$681	$836

Source: WSDOT Financial Planning and Economic Analysis

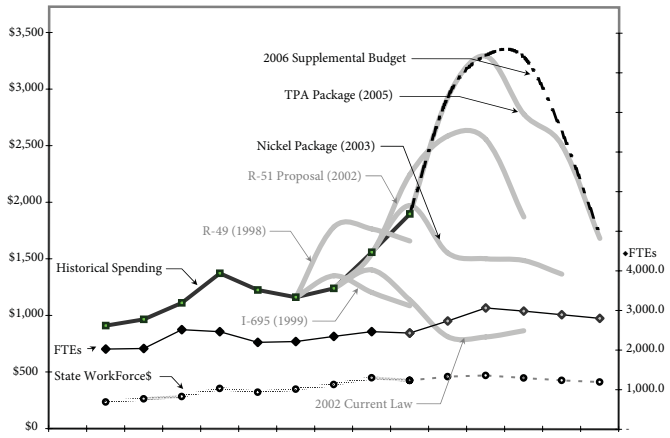
The chart above shows how inflation affects the ability to fund transportation systems. For example, looking at the gas tax rate from 1991 (when the gas tax was raised to 23¢/gallon) out to 2021, the effect of inflation is clearly evident. The value (in 1991 dollars) of the 23¢ dips to a low of 18.1¢ in 2003 then rises to 21.6¢ when the Nickel tax is added in 2004, then starts to decline again until 2005 when the new tax is implemented. The value of this revenue is projected to continue to rise through 2009 when it will reach a high of 26.3¢ in constant 1991 dollars. The value then will start to decline again, reaching a projected 1991 purchasing power value of 19.2¢ in 2021. Revenues from the gas tax (expressed in 1991 purchasing power) follow the same trend line. However motor vehicle fuel consumption and travel are projected to grow with the growth in the state.

It is evident that this approach to funding transportation systems has not kept pace with overall transportation needs. Specifically, non-highway transportation system needs (like transit, rail, bike, pedestrian, marine shipping, pipelines, and others), which have the potential to increase system efficiencies and thus benefit the economy of the state and quality of life for citizens, cannot receive funding from 18th Amendment funding sources unless it can be demonstrated that doing so would benefit highways. As highway transportation systems become more and more congested, many of the most affordable and cost-effective gains in system efficiencies will need to come from new funding sources.

A further problem facing the transportation system is that of stability, or its lack, in funding sources. Unpredictability in funding and start/stop/start in projects and programs translate into highly inefficient management of the system. Instability also frustrates citizens, tax payers, and users of the system who expect it to keep up with demand and support their businesses and communities.

The chart below illustrates the funding variability over time for just highway capital investments.

Figure III-13
Highway Capital Program Trends
Historical and Projected dollars and FTEs for 1987 - 2015
$ in millions



Similar charts could also be drawn for other components of the statewide transportation system, such as the variability of funding for transit services. Local jurisdictions and transit agencies and others find difficulty in managing and planning for their facilities when funding is unpredictable and diminishing in buying power.

New Funding Sources

The 2005 Legislature tasked the Transportation Commission to conduct a statewide tolling study to consider how tolling could be used in the future both to manage traffic on the highway system and to understand revenue-generating potential. The results of the study will include:

- Potential tolling opportunities in the near-, mid-, and long-term
- Traffic analysis—how tolls will affect roadway use
- Fiscal analysis—assessing the fiscal opportunities and strategies
- Technology analysis—technologies for facilities, vehicles and financial systems
- Assessment of social and environmental impacts
- Legal and regulatory constraints
- Public attitudes—including current experiences elsewhere in the country
- Administrative arrangements—implementing and managing tolled facilities
- Project evaluation and selection—a screening process for how and where to apply tolls

WSDOT's Transportation Innovative Partnerships Program, currently in development with Transportation Commission oversight, may result in new ways to making needed investments in the transportation system with both government and private partners.

Regional funding of projects and programs may also be more of an option in the future. The Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) is a joint effort of King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties to identify specific road, transit, and possibly light rail improvement projects of regional significance in the three counties. RTID also has the authority to propose ways to fund transportation projects in the region through local taxes and fees (as approved by voters). Recent (2006) legislation on transportation governance in the region will affect how RTID and Sound Transit together can pursue needed transportation improvements.

Other revenue sources that the Legislature and others will want to consider include:

- implementing user fees based on a vehicle's miles of travel on the highway (sometimes referred to as an odometer fee)
- connecting some existing taxes (such as the gax tax) to an inflation rate
- advertising, such as used by transit agencies in and on buses, bus shelters, transit stations, and other transfer points. A point to consider is that revenues generated from such a source may be insufficient to cover the cost of administering or regulating an advertising program
- special sales tax on vehicle parts, accessories, and services
- sales tax on fuels
- tolls and pricing strategies
- general sales tax increase
- regional funding options
- special assessments or taxes as part of a community facilities district
- development impact fees
- tax increment revenues
- private sector contributions

These kinds of options, while few in number, could be expanded. They will all need further in-depth analysis to determine their usefulness and viability. Any funding source of the future must contribute to the significant needs of the transportation system and must assist in maintaining a level of stability in funding.

In 2005, the Legislature provided funding for the Joint Transportation Committee to conduct an analysis of the

long-term viability of the state's transportation financing methods and sources. Washington State currently levies a 31 cents per-gallon tax on motor vehicle fuel, including gasoline and diesel. The fuel tax and related bonding provide approximately 57% of the revenues available for the 2005-07 State Transportation Budget and varying percentages of local government transportation budgets.

The state motor fuel tax is not indexed to inflation, thus requiring periodic increases in the tax rate by the Legislature to maintain real revenues. Resistance to increasing the tax rate resulted in the tax rate staying the same for 13 years, from 1991 to 2003, thus causing revenues in real dollars to decline significantly. Further, technological advances in vehicles are increasing fuel mileage and new vehicles are being developed to operate on alternative energy sources that do not require motor fuel. Additionally, future supplies of oil are uncertain, both from a supply and cost standpoint. All of these factors bring into question the viability of the fuel tax to provide sufficient revenues needed to improve, maintain, and operate the transportation system in the future.

The Joint Transportation Committee's study findings and recommendations will be used to inform decision makers of the viability of the motor fuel tax and alternative approaches for financing and operating transportation systems in the future. The study will also propose a manner of transition to those alternatives.

The principle objective of this study is to set forth steps that Washington should take in the short and intermediate term to maintain a stable finance system and to develop and utilize alternative transportation finance tools for the long term. This should include steps to position itself to take best advantage of federal transportation financing opportunities and private initiatives. The goal is to have tangible, specific options and recommendations for the Legislature to consider and implement for future transportation funding. The final report is due to the Legislature by January 1, 2007.

Transportation Policy Studies and Plans

Statewide Transportation Studies

Many planning efforts are underway around the state that have influenced and have been influenced by the Washington Transportation Plan. In addition, various studies have influenced the plan, just as future studies will affect transportation planning in the future. Given that these plans and studies occur at different times, it is expected that their relationships to each other will continue to evolve and help guide transportation policy.

This section of the WTP highlights some of the more recent policy and study efforts that will likely influence transportation policy in the near future. In addition, routine updates to modal plans, regional transportation plans, and tribal plans will occur during the twenty year period of this plan. Each study or plan connects and relates to the WTP; in many ways each contributing to the shaping of the others.

Washington Transportation Commission Tolling Study

The purpose of the study is to help the state make policy-level decisions on if, where, when, and how to toll, by providing a practical, step-by-step tolling strategy for Washington State. Although the state had numerous toll facilities in the past, with the exception of the Washington State Ferries, there are none currently in operation. Two facilities, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project, are authorized as toll facilities and are currently under construction. WSDOT and the Puget Sound Regional Council have been reviewing 21 tolling proposals – each in various stages of study and demonstration.

This Comprehensive Tolling Study will outline a broad strategy for advancing tolling in Washington. If the legislature accepts these recommendations, tolling and pricing transportation systems will become a more common travel experience.

Summary of study tasks

- Potential tolling opportunities in the near- mid- and long-term
- Traffic analysis; how tolls will affect roadway use
- Fiscal analysis; assessing fiscal opportunities and strategies
- Technology analysis; technologies for facilities, vehicles, and financial systems
- Assessment of social and environmental impacts
- Legal and regulatory constraints
- Public attitudes, including current experiences elsewhere in the country
- Administrative arrangements; implementing and managing tolled facilities
- Project evaluation and selection; how projects should be considered and implemented

The study will provide an analysis of the following specific topics:

- Assessing the possibilities for a more uniform and equitable distribution of the financial impact on those paying tolls and explore options for reducing the outstanding debt on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge.
- The use of value pricing by the Regional Transportation Improvement District to pay for needed transportation facilities within the districts.
- The potential for tolling SR 704 (Cross-Base Highway).

The study is due to the legislature by December 1, 2006.

Washington Transportation Commission Rail Capacity and System Needs Study

The purpose of the study is to review the state's current powers, authorities, and interests in freight and passenger rail and recommend policies for state participation and ownership of rail infrastructure and service delivery. The study will also prepare a plan for managing state-owned rail assets.

Summary of Study Tasks

The study will look comprehensively at operational, capacity, institutional, economic and policy aspects of the rail system, including:

- Description of the existing rail system, characteristics of demand for rail services, and current public and private sector plans for future rail investment and operations.
- Analysis of the role of rail in the overall transportation system and in the state, regional, and national economies, including analysis of the role of rail in industry supply chains and changes in trade patterns and supply chain trends that will impact the role of rail.
- Rail capacity demand and constraints for main-line, short-line and passenger rail operations, including institutional, operational and capacity constraints.
- Rail operations strategies and improvement options
- National initiatives and funding opportunities for the state's rail program.
- Development of the rationale for state rail policies and analysis tools for evaluating policy and program options.
- Development and analysis of the state's rail policy options.
- A state rail asset management plan.

The Commission's final report is due to the legislature by December 1, 2006. This final report will include an asset management plan, an assessment of investment alternatives, a rail investment plan, and a plan for ongoing stakeholder involvement in state rail policy discussions.

Washington State Ferry System Finance Study

The 2006 Legislature instructed the Joint Transportation Committee to conduct a finance study of the Washington State Ferry system to facilitate policy discussions and decisions.

The study is expected to:

- Improve the predictability of cash flows
- Increase transparency
- Assess the organizational structure
- Verify that the Washington State Ferry system is operating at maximum efficiency
- Improve labor relations

The committee shall report the study results to the House of Representatives and Senate transportation committees by January 1, 2007.

The study must include, at a minimum, a review and evaluation of the ferry system's financial plan, including current assumptions and past studies, in the following areas:

- Operating program, including ridership, revenue, and cost forecasts, and the accuracy of those forecasts; and
- Capital program, including project scoping, prioritization and cost estimating, project changes including legislative input regarding significant project changes and performance measures.

In addition to committee members, or their designees, the governor shall appoint a representative for this study. The committee may retain consulting services to assist the committee in conducting the study, including the evaluation of financial, operating, and capital plans. The committee may also appoint other persons to assist with the study.

Washington State Long-Term Air Transporation Study

In 2005, the Governor signed into law Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5121, which authorizes a long-term air transportation and air cargo planning study for general aviation and commercial airports statewide. The legislation is also known as the Washington State Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS).

The purpose of LATS is to understand what capacity currently exists in aviation facilities and what will be needed to meet future demand for air transportation. The bill requires WSDOT Aviation to conduct an airport capacity/facility assessment in Phase I and a demand/market analysis in Phase II.

In the final phase the governor will appoint an aviation planning council. The council will review the data and make recommendations to the governor, legislature, and transportation commission on how to best meet statewide commercial and general aviation capacity needs. The project will be funded primarily through Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grants.

The statewide assessment, Phase I, is required to be submitted to the governor, appropriate standing committees of the legislature, the transportation commission, and regional transportation planning organizations by July 1, 2006.

The statewide airport capacity and facilities market analysis, Phase II, is required to be submitted to the governor, appropriate standing committees of the legislature, the transportation commission, and regional transportation planning organizations by July 1, 2007. High-speed passenger transportation facilities assessment is also required to be completed by July 1, 2007. Airport Planning Council report and recommendations, Phase III is required to be completed by July 1, 2009.

Urban Areas Congestion Relief Analysis

The 2003 legislature asked WSDOT to conduct a congestion relief analysis for the urban areas of Seattle, Spokane and Vancouver, Washington. They required the study to include proposals to alleviate congestion consistent with population and land use expectations under the growth management act and include measurement of all modes of transportation.

The analysis, examined a variety of congestion relief scenarios. Its purpose was to answer the questions, "What would it take to significantly reduce expected future traffic delay due to congestion in the state's major urban areas?" and "What are the associated costs and impacts?" The study was conducted based on adopted regional growth management plans as required by the Growth Management Act of 1990.

Primary Focus of the Analysis:

1. Existing system performance—baseline condition
2. The cost of doing no more than the funded projects by 2025
3. The price of meeting "unconstrained demand" by 2025
4. The transit/travel demand management (TDM) pricing effect on congestion relief including:

- Various highway approaches to congestion relief (answering the following questions)
- With optimum TDM, transit and pricing strategies in place, how much highway improvement is needed to achieve a particular level of congestion relief?
- How much will it cost?
- What impacts will it have?
- What benefits will it bring?

Primary findings of the Analysis

As the urban areas grow, congestion will grow too. The computer analysis showed that, without a substantial increase in transportation capacity or significant changes in travel behavior, by 2025, total travel delay could increase between three to five times in the three major urban areas.

Large-scale roadway expansion could reduce travel delay on highways. However, future population and job growth would overwhelm the ability of the most extensive capacity expansion scenarios tested in this study to reduce total regional delay to below today's levels. Furthermore, due to man-made and/or natural environmental constraints, it is estimated that the cost to reduce travel delay in 2025 to below today's level could exceed $100 billion dollars in the Central Puget Sound region alone.

Major transit expansion in the three urban areas would provide an alternative to single occupancy vehicles for people traveling congested corridors during peak periods. However, according to the computer modeling, transit expansion alone is not shown to be effective in reducing total delay at the system level. The lack of supportive land use densities and the difficulty in serving non-commute travel limits the ability of transit to serve trips that are now customarily made by auto.

Combining roadway and transit improvements to match the unique characteristics of particular corridors is shown by the modeling to provide the potential for more practical congestion relief when compared to single strategies. The monetary cost for the combined

improvement would not be cheaper than the roadway improvement alone in order to achieve the same level of travel delay reduction.

Region-wide value pricing (roadway toll rates vary according to demand levels) is indicated to be very effective in reducing total delay. Roadway tolling helps to dampen travel demand, shorten trips, shift travel to non-peak periods, and encourage use of other travel options (transit, carpooling, biking and walking) that are not subject to toll charges. Value pricing helps to maximize the efficiency of our transportation system. Value pricing is consistent with the way almost all other utility and transportation services are provided in market-based economies (for example, water, electricity, air travel and telecommunications services). As with the use of prices to establish access to services in other utility areas, special provisions may be necessary to assure adequate access by those unable to pay market prices for indispensable services. The special requirements need to be carefully considered.

Value pricing in the form of High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes is found to reduce corridor delay and make the corridor operate more efficiently. HOT lanes make corridor travel time more reliable, which benefits everyone, including occasional users.

A strategic combination of transportation supply and demand management is suggested by the computer models to be effective in fighting the growing demand and capacity imbalance. When value pricing is added to a mix of highway and transit capacity improvements, the model analysis shows a large increase in benefits for a small additional cost. This combination of capacity improvements and value pricing should be given much greater attention as an implementation strategy.

Strategic Highway Safety Plan

A state-developed Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) is a new federal requirement of SAFETEA-LU, 23 USC 148. The SHSP will meet those federal requirements for Washington State.

The purpose of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan is to identify Washington State's traffic safety needs and guide investment decisions to achieve significant reductions in traffic fatalities and serious injuries. In developing this plan, Washington State seeks to build traffic safety partnerships throughout the state in order to align and leverage our resources to address Washington's traffic safety challenges.

Closely following the successful model adopted in the AASHTO Strategic Highway Safety Plan Washington State's SHSP is strongly data driven. The AASHTO SHSP model was developed in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Transportation Research Board (TRB). At the core of Washington State's SHSP are traffic safety emphasis areas and proven strategies/countermeasures that target problems unique to Washington roadways. These emphasis areas and proven strategies are organized under the following five basic categories: Driver and Occupant Behaviors; Other Special Users; Roadways; Emergency Medical Services; and Traffic Information Systems.

The SHSP provides a comprehensive framework of specific goals, objectives and strategies for reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Statewide Transportation System Plans

The WTP is a multimodal transportation plan. The various transportation system plans developed by WSDOT and partner agencies directly connect to the WTP to improve statewide transportation planning and policies. The following plans are listed in alphabetical order:

Aviation System Plan

Airline passengers, mail and parcel services, emergency services, agriculture, and aviation-related businesses all depend on an adequate network of airports and connections to intermodal transportation services and facilities. The aviation system plan provides the framework for the preservation, enhancement, and public investment strategies of the state and federal

government to meet current and future aviation needs. The plan determines the number, location, and type of aviation facilities required to adequately serve the state's aviation needs over the next 20 years.

State Statutory Authority: RCW 36.70, RCW 36.70A, RCW 47.06, RCW 47.68, RCW 47.80

Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan

Bicycling and walking are two modes that signify a dynamic transportation system. They not only provide environmental and health benefits, but also provide a strategy to reduce traffic congestion and have a positive economic impact across the state. The goals of the plan are to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety while increasing the number of people who bicycle and walk. The strategies for accomplishing these goals include: maximizing funding through partnerships; raising awareness on the needs of bicycle and pedestrian safety; and sharing information on bicycle and pedestrian issues between agencies, jurisdictions, and organizations in Washington.

State Statutory Authority: RCW 47.06.100

Corridor Management Plan

While somewhat different in purpose than a highway, route or corridor plan, Corridor Management Plans (CMPs) provide an analysis of a corridor over a 20 year planning horizon. CMPs are developed in coordination with the United States Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration Scenic Byways program. These plans follow FHWA guidelines for a master planning process along a corridor, with a focus both within and outside of the highway right of way. CMPs establish community-based goals and implementation strategies along a corridor and describe how to use community resources efficiently, how to conserve intrinsic qualities of the corridor and how to enhance its value to the community. See map of byways in appendix.

State Statutory Authority: RCW 47.06, RCW 81.104.100

Freight and Goods Transportation System Update

The Washington State Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS) is a classification of state highways, county roads, and city streets based on their average annual gross truck tonnage. The FGTS report is updated on a periodic basis, is data driven, and identifies the highways and roads most heavily used to move freight by truck. Projects that improve conditions for freight transportation serve as a resource for establishing project eligibility for the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board grants, designation as Highways of Statewide Significance, and fulfill federal reporting requirements for truck and traffic counts. In addition, the FGTS report also supports pavement upgrade planning, traffic congestion management and other investment decisions, and allows preliminary assessment of statewide freight needs and impacts.

Last Updated: December 2005
Next Scheduled Update: 2007
State Statutory Authority: RCW 47.06.045, RCW 81.104.100

Highway System Plan

The Highway System Plan (HSP) guides WSDOT in prioritizing and budgeting for highway projects and is updated every two years. The HSP is a result of federal and state legislative action which introduced greater integrated and coordinated planning processes. Together with the WTP, the HSP assesses future transportation needs through a collaborative planning process with the goal of ensuring that the transportation system provides convenient, reliable, safe, efficient and seamless connections and services.

State Statutory Authority: RCW 47.06.050, RCW 36.70A.70, RCW 47.80.030

Public Transportation and Intercity Rail Passenger Plan
Developed with the vision that people should be able to easily and efficiently move through congested intercity corridors using a variety of transportation options, the 20 year Public Transportation and Intercity Rail Passenger Plan guides the state in its public transportation role, describes the condition of public transportation, discusses significant issues, identifies future needs, and proposes realistic strategies and responsibilities for achieving the vision. It provides the framework for preserving the public transportation system while improving mobility for a growing population.

State Statutory Authority: RCW 47.06.040, RCW 47.06.090, RCW 47.06.110

Route Development Plan
Route Development Plans (RDPs) are planning studies on specified routes conducted across WSDOT region planning offices. RDPs assess highway corridors to evaluate future needs over a 20 year period. The studies identify what state system improvements are appropriate and what local system improvements are needed to keep the state system functioning. The approach to the studies varies depending upon the characteristics of the specific route. The general process for developing an RDP involves the following: define the study area, establish goals and objectives, collect data, conduct public meetings, coordinate with agencies and communities, conduct traffic analysis and develop proposals for implementation and evaluation.

State Statutory Authority: RCW 47.06, 36.70A

Washington State Ferries Long-Range Strategic Plan
The Washington State Ferries Draft Long-Range Strategic Plan guides future service and investment decisions of the Washington State Ferries through the year 2030. The primary goal of the plan is to prepare Washington State Ferries to provide ferry service that is best able to meet future customer demand. The plan guides key policy decisions in the following areas: long-term funding, role of fares in long-term funding, capital investments, and growth and service expansion. Ultimately, the plan attempts to minimize congestion delays on all routes and add service where it is needed most.

Last Updated: 1999
Next Scheduled Update: 2006
State Statutory Authority: RCW 47.06.040

> "Like the Canoe Journey, transportation development involves years of coordinated effort charting a journey to destinations where high priority transportation projects become a reality, growing our communities into a better place to live."
>
> ***Jim Peters***
> *Chairman, Squaxin Island Tribe*
> *Tribal/State Transportation Conference*
> *October 17, 2005*

Roadside Classification Plan
The Roadside Classification Plan provides policy and guidelines for the management of Washington State highway roadsides, including planning, design, construction, and maintenance activities. The intent of this plan is to provide a uniform framework for consistent, proactive roadside management statewide and to facilitate cost-effective restoration of roadsides. In coordination with the State Highway System Plan, it sets statewide goals and objectives for roadside management, establishes roadside character classifications, provides guidelines for roadside restoration and advocates the use of native plants, integrated vegetation management (IVM), and a long-term approach to achieve sustainable roadsides.

Washington's Strategic Highway Safety Plan

The Strategic Highway Safety plan (SHSP) has been developed to identify Washington State's traffic safety needs and to guide investment decisions to acheive significant reductions in traffic fatalities and serious injuries. In developing this plan, Washington State seeks to build traffic safety partnerships throughout the state in order to align and leverage our resources to address Washington's traffic safety challenges.

The SHSP was developed as a requirement of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

Governance and Partnerships

The Washington Transportation Commission-2006

In both 2005 and 2006, the legislature and the Governor redefined the roles and responsibilities of the Transportation Commission and the Washington State Department of Transportation. The legislature also made changes in how the Puget Sound region may make regional investments in transportation.

Transportation Commission Roles

The 2005 and 2006 legislature changed the roles and responsibilities of the Washington Transportation Commission, who retained certain authority, including statewide transportation planning, bond issuance approval, serving as the state's tolling authority, and setting ferry fares. Additionally, the Commission received an expanded role as a public forum for transportation policy development.

The Commission's role in developing transportation policy was modified in a way that largely increased its role as a policy advisory body to the governor and the legislature, with the following mandates:

- Propose policies to be adopted by the Governor and the legislature to ensure the development and maintenance of a comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation system.
- Provide coordination among federal, state, local, and regional transportation planning and programing agencies.
- Provide for public involvement in transportation planning.
- Prepare a statewide transportation plan based on existing state policies, as well as state and federal laws, while reflecting the Priorities of Government and addressing regional needs including multimodal transportation planning.
- Conduct transportation-related studies and policy analysis as directed by the legislature and governor in the biennial transportation budget (refer to the tolling and rail study in the Policy Studies and Plans Chapter).
- Provide a public forum for developing transportation policies with regional transportation planning organizations, transportation stakeholders, counties, cities, and citizens.
- The commission may recommend to the secretary of transportation, the governor, and the legislature means for obtaining appropriate citizen and professional involvement in transportation policy formulation and matters related to the powers and duties of the WSDOT.
- The Commission may hold hearings and explore ways to improve the mobility of the citizens of the state.
- In addition to the monthly meeting required by statute, the Commission must convene regional forums on transportation at a minimum of every five years. The purpose of the forums is to gather citizen input on transportation.
- Every two years, prepare a statewide multimodal transportation progress report and transportation priorities for the ensuing biennium, reporting goals, targets and benchmarks.

- Offer policy guidance and make recommendations to the governor and legislature in key issue areas including:
  - Transportation Financing
  - Preserving, maintaining and operating the state transportation system
  - Transportation infrastructure needs
  - Promoting best practices for adoption and use by transportation-related agencies and programs
  - Transportation efficiencies that will improve service delivery and/or coordination
  - Improved planning and coordination among transportation agencies and providers
  - Use of intelligent transportation systems and other technology-based solutions
  - Reporting of performance against goals, targets, and benchmarks
  - Developing a 10-year investment program

- Provide oversight and make key decisions related to the implementation of the newly created Transportation Innovative Partnerships program within the WSDOT

Accountability

- The commission must establish performance measures to ensure transportation system performance at local, regional, and state government levels.
- Public transportation agencies must submit maintenance and preservation management plans for certification by the commission.
- The County Road Administration Board (CRAB) must establish a standard for the maintenance of transportation assets, compile the data annually and report the findings to the Commission.
- Each biennia, cities and towns must provide the commission preservation rating information on their arterial network.

New Washington State Department of Transportation Roles

In addition to the roles described in detail in the Laws section of the Appendix, legislation in 2005 and 2006 changed the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) roles and responsibilities.

The primary change for WSDOT is the moving of the agency to the Governor's cabinet. The Secretary of Transportation now is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor. The Secretary now proposes WSDOT's budget and authorizes departmental requested legislation. The Secretary will continue to serve as an ex officio member of the Transportation Commission.

The department now has the responsibility to determine if highway improvement projects proposed by and funded by the Community Economic Revitalization Board are appropriate. This was previously a responsibility of the Transportation Commission. Additionally, the department now has the responsibility of adopting the functional classification of highways. This was also previously the responsibility of the Transportation Commission.

Regional Partnerships

The 2006 legislature created the Regional Transportation Commission to evaluate transportation issues in the Puget Sound region and to develop a regional transportation governance proposal. The Regional Transportation Commission is comprised of nine members, all private citizens appointed by the Governor, plus the Secretary of Transportation as a nonvoting member.

The Regional Transportation Commission will:

- Evaluate a broad range of regional transportation governance issues, including transit agency boundary adjustments, consolidation options, and coordination of all agencies (including WSDOT) that have a role in regional transportation planning, funding, and operations
- Develop a proposal that includes an option for forming a permanent, directly-elected regional transportation governing entity, as well as the governing entity's finance strategy, authorized revenue sources, and planning authority
- Submit its governance proposal to the 2007 Legislature
- The legislature modified the Puget Sound Regional Transportation Improvement District (RTID) in several respects:
- The RTID is allowed to change its boundaries to be contiguous with regional transit authority boundaries. The peninsula portion of Pierce County is exempted from inclusion in the RTID.

- The RTID must submit its finance plan as a common ballot measure along with a Sound Transit Phase 2 plan at the 2007 general election and is permitted to have a ballot title exceeding 75 words.

Regional Transportation Planning Organizations have been established by the legislature to further the coordination of transportation planning among local jurisdictions and the state. The duties of the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations include:

- Prepare and update a transportation strategy and plan for the region;
- Certify the transportation elements of comprehensive plans of cities and counties within the region are consistent with the regional transportation plan;
- Certify county-wide planning policies to be consistent with the regional transportation plan
- Develop a six year regional transportation improvement program;
- Designate a lead planning agency to coordinate the preparation of the regional transportation plan and;
- Work with local jurisdictions and agencies and the state to develop level of service standards or other transportation performance measures.

"The coordination between the Washington Transportation Plan and our Regional Transportation Plan is critical to ensure proper prioritization and funding to maintain and improve the condition and accessibility of our city, county and state road system as we seek to maximize our agricultural and recreational economic development and safety opportunities."

Paul Bennett, P.E.
Quad-County Regional Transportation Organization
May, 2006

Transportation and Land Use

Historically, the type and availability of transportation has had a major influence in defining the physical structure of our communities. Communities have evolved from being oriented around ports, rivers, canals, and railroads, to a pattern now dominated by the roadway. In turn, where we live, work, recreate, and find goods and services all drive transportation demand. Community design, social, political and economic activity, and transportation are intertwined.

Traffic congestion, travel delays, unreliable travel times, and reduced safety can occur when demand exceeds roadway or transit capacity. Transportation problems can be exacerbated when:

- People perceive that the only available and apparently affordable housing they desire is miles, cities, and even counties away from jobs, schools, shopping, and recreation.

- Businesses relocate to the suburban fringe, creating "edge cities" and stranding their transit-dependent employees because traditional transit systems don't typically provide effective service in the "reverse-commute" direction or from suburb to suburb.

Transportation problems cannot be solved solely by building additional roadways, interchanges, transit lines and stations, or intercity and commuter railway capacity. These actions can address some congestion in the short term and are very important, but developing a transportation system to improve Washington's mobility in this new millenium that is sustainable, environmentally sound, socially equitable, and economically viable requires recognizing that:

- Transportation problems are symptoms of underlying individual and community decisions.

- "Sprawl" development has infrastructure cost implications and travel cost and time implications that can directly affect housing affordability and quality of life. (No one actually wants to commute several hours a day in congested traffic or considers the event life-enriching. People do it to gain other real and perceived benefits.)

- Many metropolitan area issues, including transportation and affordable housing, are regional and sometimes interregional in nature. Addressing these issues requires unprecedented levels of government cooperation and shared vision.

Transportation funds are collected from the public with the expectation that they will be used to meet transportation needs. There are more transportation needs and desires than there are funds to support them. Any expenditure of transportation funds must have a reasonable nexus to improving mobility and access for people, goods, services, and information.

However, since transportation and community development are interconnected, the availability and location of housing, especially affordable housing, can have a positive impact on reducing overall transportation demand and increase the use and effectiveness of the transportation system. The appropriate investment of transportation funds in projects and services can foster affordable housing and yield a long-term transportation benefit.

Transportation investments can support the vitality and redevelopment of urban areas and first-ring suburbs. This includes brownfield and grayfield areas, where infrastructure already exists and affordable housing can be developed. Such redevelopment can serve to increase transit usage and efficiency. It can also promote walking and bicycling.

Local agencies can use their discretionary transportation funds such as Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality and Transportation Enhancement and Regional Surface Transportation Program funding to help support transit-oriented development, redevelopment, and affordable housing development. Local agency-provided transportation improvements can offset some of the total cost of transit oriented development or other development that includes affordable housing.

State transportation investments can be prioritized with the intent of targeting areas where local investments in transportation facilities, transit services, and local decisions on development help to increase the long-term return on the state's transportation investment. Transportation planning funds can be used to jointly plan transportation services and community development to maximize return on future investments and ensure the transportation system complements community growth and vitality.

Transportation and Land Use—Key

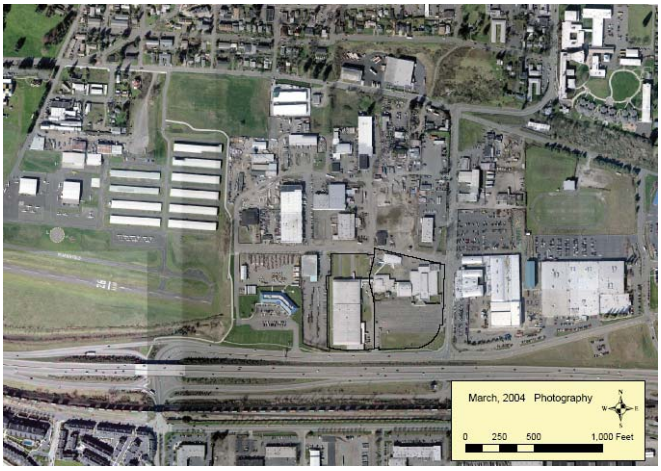
> "One of the current strengths of the WTP is its focus on prioritizing the state's transportation needs like system preservation, among others. Transportation system preservation is the top priority for our rural Peninsula RTPO. One of the WTP's potential future strengths is its planned focus on how transportation and land use development interface."
>
> ***Patrick Babineau***
> *Director*
> *Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization*

Challenges

Washingtonians often talk about the challenges facing the transportation systems in the next twenty years, including sprawl, quality of life, and the threats to natural ecosystems and salmon.

Confronting this issue is central to creating forward-looking programs for transportation investment. There is no question that efficient transportation systems are essential to economic vitality. There is no question that individualized free market choices about housing, work, and lifestyles are influencing transportation and land use with greater force than either independently influences the other. And there is no question that failure of transportation systems to meet needs that growing communities place upon them can trigger social and environmental costs, including poor land use outcomes.

Development Encroachment



The above photo illustrates development encroachment upon Pearson Air Field in Vancouver, WA.
Source: Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association

Land use decisions that allow development adjacent to general aviation airports have the potential to affect flight operations. The airport may no longer be able to function if nearby development creates an unsafe setting for planes taking off and landing. Since the airports are often important to the economy of the area, diminishing or eliminating their ability to operate can hurt the region.

Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) requires local jurisdictions to discourage incompatible development adjacent to public use airports through

comprehensive plan policies and development regulations. Incompatible development can affect both the short-term and long-term operational capabilities of the airport, impact airport capacity, cause safety implications for people in the air and on the ground, impact noise sensitive uses, affect navigation, and impair the utility of the airport as an economic resource. Airports are recognized under GMA as Essential Public Facilities.

WSDOT Aviation Division is required to provide a technical assistance program to assist towns, cities, and counties in developing sound strategies and implementation procedures to discourage incompatible development within an airport influence area. Through the technical resource program it is recognized that many strategies are available to local jurisdictions when planning for and developing comprehensive plan policies and regulations and can vary from airport to airport and region to region. WSDOT encourages ports, special districts, airport sponsors, aviation interests, and local jurisdictions to form partnerships and to work together to discourage incompatible development. The program provides research documentation and best management practices and tools that can be used by local jurisdictions and airports in addressing land use compatibility adjacent to airports.

Similarly, Washington's seaports, highways, rail lines, and distribution centers are vital links to the global economy. The compatibility of these facilities with neighboring communities can affect Washington's ability to move products for export and serve as a gateway for imported goods.

Freight industry representatives discuss challenges in North Central Washington

Growth Management Goals

- Focus urban growth in urban areas
- Reduce sprawl
- Provide efficient transportation
- Encourage affordable housing
- Encourage sustainable economic development
- Protect property rights
- Process permits in a timely and fair manner
- Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries
- Retain open space and habitat areas and develop recreation opportunities
- Protect the environment
- Encourage citizen participation and regional coordination
- Ensure adequate public facilities and services
- Preserve important historic resources
- Manage shorelines wisely

Growth Management

Transportation systems are costly public investments. Land use decisions made by local jurisdictions are key determinants in how the state's transportation system serves people, communities, and the economy. Transportation, in turn, helps define the physical structure of our communities.

When passed in 1990, the Growth Management Act included 13 far-reaching goals to guide local comprehensive plans and development regulations. (A fourteenth goal for shortelines was added later.)

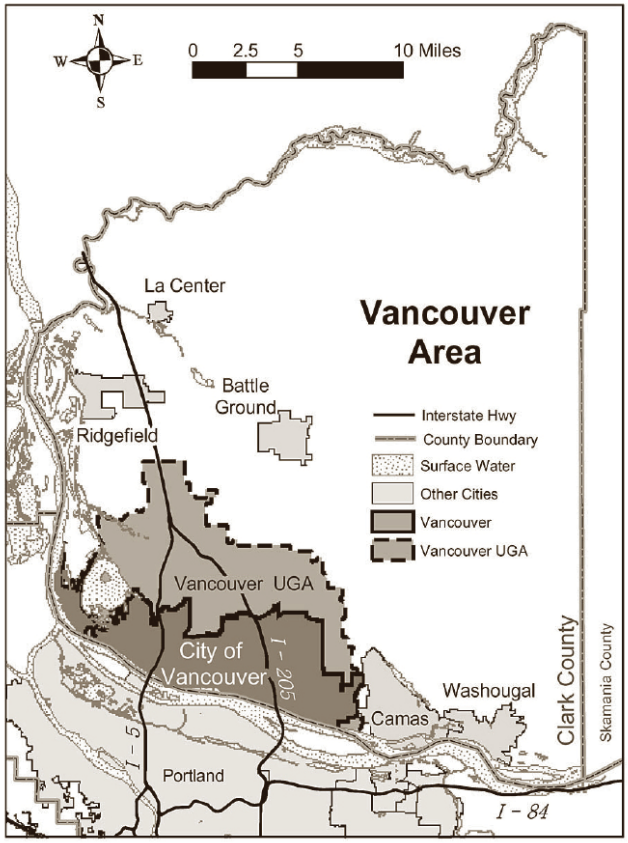
The basic principle of the Growth Management Act is that new development should be allowed only at a pace that public agencies providing public services like roads, water, and sewer systems can keep up with.

Local jurisdictions planning under the Growth Management Act implemented these statewide goals with flexibility to make their own choices about growth and development.

Transportation investments must be made in support of growth management strategies or growth management cannot succeed.
Our state's Growth Management Act (GMA) created a framework rooted in local government for reconciling the pressures from growth on the uses of land with the consequent demands for public infrastructure

investment. Since the GMA passed, we have seen improved consistency and public engagement in our local land use decisions as a direct result of the coordinated planning required by the law. Major elements of the GMA are:

Comprehensive Plans
Fast-growing counties and the cities within them are required to create comprehensive plans that include several plan elements addressing projected changes in land use and public facilities. Cities and counties have discretion in their comprehensive plans to make many choices about how to plan for and accommodate growth. The local transportation system is part of the infrastructure needed to support the land use element of the comprehensive plan. Regional transportation planning organizations certify the transportation element of local comprehensive plans for consistency with regional goals.



Vancouver and surrounding area. Source: Vancouver GIS.

Urban Growth Areas
Jurisdictions preparing comprehensive plans are also required to designate Urban Growth Areas (UGA) where future population growth and infill development is to be encouraged and outside of which growth should occur only if it is rural in character. The purpose of the UGA is to attract and funnel growth to certain core areas, increasing density there while maintaining the rural character of the land outside the UGA.

Concurrency
Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that a local jurisdiction's infrastructure keep pace with development. The requirement for concurrency applies to all local public infrastructures, including transportation. Concurrency is a significant tool, and provides a basis to ensure that a community's adopted transportation level of service (LOS) standard can be maintained. If development of a specific project threatens to cause the LOS on a transportation facility to decline below standards identified in the adopted plan's transportation element, that project shall be denied by the local government unless improvements can be made concurrent with development.

In 1998, amendments to the GMA and the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) process were enacted to clarify and address setting level of service standards for regional and statewide significant transportation facilities in the local plans and the applicability of concurrency requirements for these facilities. The concurrency requirement applies at the local level; the law is silent on its applicability to the regional transportation system. Applicability of concurrency to state highways and ferry routes continues to surface as a policy discussion.

The concurrency issue is clearly linked through the overarching goals of the Growth Management Act to local, regional, and state transportation planning and funding.

Two legislative studies are currently underway to address concurrency. These studies include an examination of whether the concurrency goal should apply to state-owned transportation facilities and and another considering how multimodal systems such as transit contribute to concurrency goals. These studies present a timely opportunity to discuss the Growth Management Act's concurrency requirement as they relates to statewide transportation needs.

Applying concurrency requirements can have unintended consequences. If new development cannot afford to pay for all improvements needed to achieve an adequate level of service within the designated

Urban Growth Areas, pressure for new housing can lead to community stagnation or the sprawl the Growth Management Act was intended to control.

Additionally, development in one or more separated towns and cities along a highway may affect neighboring communities. Cumulative increase in travel may reduce the effectiveness and the safety of the highway corridor.

▶ "Encourage development in areas where public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner."

Palouse RTPO
2005 Regional Transportation Plan